

**COUNCIL POLICY****CURRENT**

SUBJECT: PREPARATION OF LONG RANGE PLANS  
POLICY NO.: 600-40  
EFFECTIVE DATE: January 29, 1991

**BACKGROUND:**

The approval of the Resource Protection Ordinance No. O-17253 N.S. on February 27, 1989 resulted in new regulations being applied to parcels containing environmental resources, including wetlands, wetland buffers, floodplains, hillsides, biologically sensitive lands, and significant prehistoric and historic sites and resources. This Council Policy was created in order to ensure that the preparation and adoption of long range plans for the City includes a thorough analysis of the constraints and opportunities of the planning area, including but not limited to the resources protected by the Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO).

When environmental resources and other site conditions are thoroughly reviewed and addressed, the long range plan will more effectively achieve the City's planning objectives and become more effective in serving as the basis for the evaluation of future permits for individual projects within the plan area. This policy establishes procedures to be used in the development and approval of long range plans.

Long range plans include new community plans, general plan or community plan updates, plan amendments, precise plans, specific plans or other mechanisms for long-term future land use and facilities planning.

**PURPOSE:**

To provide guidelines for the preparation and approval of long range plans to:

1. Ensure thorough analysis of site constraints and opportunities early in the planning process;
2. Aid in the review of permits and maps for projects in the planning area;
3. Ensure the protection of environmental resources by preserving contiguous open space systems and providing mechanisms to acquire or protect those resources; and
4. Ensure that adopted land use policies and objectives are considered in the context of the suitability of the plan area for development.

**POLICY:**

It is the policy of the City Council that a development suitability analysis, as described below, will be conducted for all long range plans as a first step in the plan preparation. This analysis will ensure that environmental resources and other site constraints and opportunities are fully considered in preparation of the plan.

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Development, including land uses, roads, and other facilities, shall be distributed so as to minimize encroachment into hillsides, biologically sensitive lands, significant prehistoric and historic resources and other resources addressed in the Resource Protection Ordinance. Mechanisms to protect these resources must be addressed in the long range plans in sufficient detail to adequately evaluate future applications for permits and maps in the planning area, and to ensure reasonable use of land or appropriate compensation for all property owners.

PROCEDURES:

1. Development Suitability Analysis. The first step in the preparation of long range plans pursuant to this policy is the submittal of a development suitability analysis to the Planning Department, which includes all site information required by the Department in order to evaluate the project. The analysis must consider the resources addressed by the Resource Protection Ordinance, as well as other factors identified by the Department such as visual resources, topography, public facilities needs, public safety issues and adjacent land uses. The constraints and opportunities identified shall be used to determine the portions of the property that are most suitable for development. The development suitability analysis should indicate areas of high, medium and low development potential. The Planning Director's approval of the site suitability analysis should occur prior to the development of a draft land use plan.
2. Consistency with the Resource Protection Ordinance. Long range plans are to be reviewed for consistency with the Resource Protection Ordinance. Long range plans which are processed concurrently with a permit or subdivision map shall require a Resource Protection Permit for those portions of the planning area covered by the permit or map.

RPO Developable Acreage Analysis. Under certain circumstances, such as plans developed for predominantly undeveloped communities, the Planning Director may require that the long range plan area be analyzed in accordance with Guidelines and that a "RPO consistent" draft concept plan be prepared using the following procedures:

- (a) Map all of the sensitive resources as defined in the Resource Protection Ordinance, including but not limited to 25% or greater slopes, biologically sensitive lands, wetlands and wetland buffers, floodplains, prehistoric and historic resources and geologic hazards.
- (b) On either a parcel-by-parcel or ownership basis, determine the encroachment allowance permitted. For long range plans only, the encroachment allowance into slopes and biological resources must be calculated together for these combined categories (not separately), so as to not concentrate allowable encroachments exclusively into either slopes or biological resources.
- (c) On either a parcel-by-parcel or ownership basis, determine an estimated developable area, including areas which do not contain sensitive RPO resources plus allowed encroachment. Then, calculate total development area for the long range plan. This analysis to determine developable acreage may be based on long plan-level resource information, and the analysis does not necessarily take the place of the need for more detailed resource analysis at the time Resource Protection Permits for future projects are reviewed and approved.

- (d) Using the total developable area as determined by the RPO analysis and the site suitability analysis, determine the best location for development to occur within the planning area so as to minimize impacts to environmental resources. Impacts of road alignments, grading and brush management must be considered.

Urbanized Communities. For predominantly urbanized communities, a parcel-by-parcel or ownership consistency analysis of the plan area may not be appropriate. However, the plan should include a resource protection element, which explains plan impacts to resources and how resources are to be protected through plan implementation.

Objective. It is the City's objective that substantial acreages of consolidated habitat areas be preserved by implementing the long range plan which could not be achieved if the property was developed on a parcel-by-parcel basis. Ecosystem connections and function should be preserved. Therefore, it may be desirable to locate development within some environmentally sensitive areas if clustering development would preserve a contiguous open space system or otherwise result in a more environmentally sensitive alternative at the long range planning scale.

The need for mitigation of impacts to resources must be analyzed and a framework for future mitigation and resource protection included in the plan.

3. General Plan and Other City Policies. The Long Range Plan should be analyzed based on General Plan policies and objectives and other adopted City Council policies. The draft land use plan, if necessary and appropriate, to meet these land use planning policies and objectives. Any additional mitigation measures required for these modifications must be addressed in the plan.
4. Planning Department Recommendation. The Planning Director's recommendation on the proposed draft long range should be based on the site suitability analysis, the consistency of the plan with the Resource Protection Ordinance, and on the ability of the plan to meet other adopted General Plan and City Council policies and objectives.

All future projects or permits in the long range plan area will be subject to the provisions of the Resource Protection Ordinance. If the plan is consistent with the Resource Protection Ordinance, the plan should describe how projects would comply with the ordinance. In some cases, where proposed projects or permits are consistent with the long range plan, future long range plan, future Resource Protection Permits may be approved using the substantial conformance provision in the alternative compliance process contained in RPO. In the case of a substantial conformance, determining adequate resource information would need to have been provided at the time of the long range plan adoption, and the City Council should determine upon long range plan adoption the substantial conformance process would be appropriate.

If a long range plan is found not to be consistent with the Resource Protection Ordinance, then an alternative concept plan shall also be presented to the decisionmaker which would be consistent.

In any case, the long range plan must contain an explanation of the City policies and objectives being met by the plan, and must relate the development areas, land use types and intensities to the development suitability analysis and resource analysis.

HISTORY:

Adopted by Resolution No. R-277284 01/29/1991